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Two Viruses, HIV and SARS CoV-2:  Synergistic, Antagonistic or Neutral?

As of August 2020, SARS CoV-2 has spread globally, infecting men, women, the young and the elderly.,  Although SARS CoV-2 causes  few or mild symptoms in the majority of patients,  it is clearly lethal for some.  While certain features characterize  those at greatest risk for severe disease and death - the elderly, the obese, persons living with chronic pulmonary disease, among others - there has been grave concern that individuals living with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), might be especially vulnerable.  Since HIV emerged 40 years ago, causing a very different infection, we have learned how to treat and control HIV, although not eradicate it.  The number of persons living with HIV is unknown but thought to be in the range of 38 million persons.  There has been concern that persons with HIV might be vulnerable to SARS CoV-2, both a) at greater risk for acquiring SARS CoV-2nfection and b) once acquired, at greater risk for severe morbidity and mortality.  I will review the emerging literature that suggests that HIV neither increases the risk for acquisition of SARS CoV-2 nor, if acquired, for more severe disease than is seen in the non-HIV infected.  Whereas this is the picture that is emerging for persons living with controlled HIV,  in contrast  individuals with advanced, uncontrolled HIV are vulnerable for severe consequences.  What is obvious is the indirect impact of the SARS CoV-2 for the HIV pandemic.  The SARS CoV-2 pandemic  is disrupting testing and treatment programs around the world, thereby threatening to reverse years of progress This disruption ranges from diversion of scarce resources to the SARS CoV-2, to the inability of patients to safely access care. While innovations in telehealth are having dramatic beneficial impact, I expect SARS CoV-2 will continue to challenge our control of the HIV epidemic.